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CHAP. V.

Of the power of Man to do the Will of God.

[Continued from page 112.]

THIS proposition, that man has power of himself to do the will of God, is repugnant to the whole Gospel; and especially to that declaration of Christ, *without me you can do nothing*: yet for this proposition, our Socinian has soberly pleaded; attempting to prove it from those words of the Scripture, where God said to the people, *Turn ye from your evil ways, why will ye die, O house of Israel?* Hence he argues, that the people had power to turn themselves, otherwise God would not have required it. But, unless we are to take the Scripture by halves we shall find it said by the people, and by their prophets, *Turn Thou us unto thee, O Lord, and we shall be turned*, Lam. v. 21. and Jer. xxxi. 18. So that if both these passages are laid together, it follows, that, in the great work of conversion, there is a part for man, and a part for God; as in that exhortation of the Apostle, *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do, of his*

good pleasure. Phil. ii. 12, 13. There was a man, who came to our Saviour with a withered hand, of which he had lost the use: yet Christ said unto him, *Stretch forth thine hand*. On this occasion, our author might argue, that Christ did not heal this man, for that he must have had the use of his hand, otherwise he would not have been commanded to stretch it out. But this would be very superficial reasoning; for the man, in faith and obedience to the word of Christ, attempted to stretch forth his hand, and in the attempt received that power, which was necessary to effect it. It is just so with us; and without question, the miracle was designed to illustrate our own case. God commands us, with our withered faculties, to do his will; we endeavour to do it; and, in the attempt, receive that ability, which is necessary to accomplish it. In all these cases, the will of man, and the power of God, operate together. We turn ourselves, and God turneth us: the man stretched out his hand, and Christ stretched it out for him: we work out our salvation, and God worketh in us at the same time. This is what appears, when we lay the Scripture together: and you see how dangerous it is to listen to those, who argue from a scrap of the Bible, misunderstood, and perverted, so as to render the grace of God of none effect.

Power in man to do the will of God, says the author, *is no foundation for pride; for what have we that we have not received?* The question really is, whether we have this power by nature, independent of the Gospel; or whether it is given to us, in consequence of the Gospel? Certainly not by nature; God having purposely so ordered things, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and NOT OF US. 2 Cor. iv. 7. If all is right in us by nature, and we have within ourselves the power by which we are to be saved, then there are no *works of the devil* to be destroyed, and Christ need not have come into the world. But then it is objected, that if God help us by the miraculous powers of his Grace, this doctrine must encourage us to presumption, and to put off our reformation in hope of some future sudden conversion. To be sure it may do this; and so may all the doctrines of the Gospel be abused, when they fall into bad hands. Some were so perverse as to argue in favour of an *abundance of sin*, that the *grace of God*, might *abound* in forgiving it; but the Apostle did not therefore withdraw his doctrine of justification by faith in Christ: he stated the case, corrected the abuse, and left his doctrine in possession, as before. So must we do now: if any ill use be made of the Gospel, we must not give the Gospel up, but demonstrate the abuse, and correct it, from the Gospel itself.

CHAP. VI.

Of Original Sin.

IN this chapter, the author allows that we *suffer* by the sin of Adam, but says, it is impossible we should have *sinned* in him. Whether we have sinned after the similitude of

Adam's transgression, and how far his individual offence may be ours, is a nice question: but the doctrine of original sin may be settled without it.—If in consequence of Adam's transgression, we have derived from him a constitution, of which sin is the natural fault, then sin is *original* in human nature, and comes into the world with us; as the leprosy or gout may be *original*, in these who derive it from their parents, and bring the seeds of these distempers into the world with him. If nothing but death had entered into the world by means of Adam's offence, the doctrine might have been doubtful: but the Apostle teaches us, that when death entered into the world, *sin entered* with it; and that *death has passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*: the effect is permanent in our suffering, as the cause is permanent in our constitution. The Apostle therefore persists to speak of mankind, as being under the *Law of sin and death*; not of death only, but of sin also; and that *the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus* hath made them *free* from both. The name given to the sinful nature of man, is that of *flesh*, in opposition to the renewed spirit of a Christian. I know, says the Apostle, that in me (that is in my *flesh*) dwelleth no good thing; and, in the verse before, he speaks of *sin dwelling in him*. At last he exclaims, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the *body of this death?*" This *flesh*, this *body of sin*, this *body of death*, which is also called the *old man*, and is pronounced to be *corrupt*, are so many expressions affirming that sin is original in man's nature. And if there were no other proof of it in the Bible, this consideration alone would be sufficient, that none can enter into the kingdom of God,

unless he is *born again*: for there can be no occasion to save us, by a new birth, unless we are lost, by the old.

From *Burkitt—On the Lord's Supper.*

The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is one of the most divine mysteries of the Christian religion, and the highest act and exercise of religious worship. All who profess to be disciples of Christ Jesus, should faithfully prepare for, and frequently partake of this Holy Ordinance.

1. *The nature of this ordinance.*—The Lord's Supper is a spiritual feast appointed for a solemn remembrance of Christ's death, and is a seal of that covenant which God hath made with us in Christ.

2d. *The ends of this institution.*—They are such as these: 1st. The renewing of that solemn covenant with God, which we entered into at our baptism, when we were dedicated unto the Lord, and took an oath of fidelity to Christ, to become his faithful soldiers and servants unto our lives end. 2d. Another end is to remember the love of our dying Redeemer, in laying down his life for us. 3dly. To seal unto us the pardon of our sins, and the assurance of everlasting life. Christ assures us of pardon on his part, if we perform the condition of faith and repentance on our part. 4th. Another end of this ordinance is, to *fortify the soul with power to resist sin, and to get the victory over it; yea to mortify and subdue it.* 5th. To unite all the professors of Christ's Holy Religion in the strictest bond of love and charity.

3rd. *The obligations which lie upon christians to attend upon Christ in this ordinance.* These are especially two, an obligation of duty and of interest.

We lie under an obligation to frequent this ordinance in point of duty and obedience to our Saviour's command, and especially if we consider what kind of a command it is—the command of a Sovereign—the command of a Saviour—the command of a dying Saviour. It is a command of love, a gracious command—"Eat and live." *It is a pleasant, easy, and honourable command.* What more honourable than to feast with the King of Kings? The due observance of it will help us to keep the rest of God's commandments. It will be an efficacious means to make us all He wills. Finally, *it is a plain, positive, express command, from which nothing can discharge us, but a countermand from Heaven, which we never expect, or a want of opportunity which we cannot plead.*

2d. It is our interest to practice this duty. By a due approach to the Lord's Table, our baptismal vow is renewed; our weak faith strengthened; our languishing love inflamed; our desires after Christ enlarged; our sorrow for sin heightened; fresh power against victory over sin obtained; our present joy and comfort multiplied; and our future hope of Heaven advanced. Oh! how unkind then are they to their Saviour, and also cruel to their own souls, who live in the neglect of this engaging, uniting, quickening, confirming ordinance of the Lord's Supper? Whom all the melting entreaties, and passionate importunities, of the ministers of Christ, cannot prevail upon to practice this most reasonable and advantageous duty.

Some of the excuses made for the neglect of this duty.—1st. The extraordinary dread and solemnity of the ordinance. This is putting off our Saviour with a compliment, tel-

ling him that the privilege is too great, the dignity too high, and the ordinance too solemn, for them to approach unto. This may be a good reason why we should approach the ordinance with preparation and care, but is *no excuse for turning our backs upon it.* Shall we, *under the pretence of reverencing his person, violate his precept,* and at once affront his authority, and condemn his kindness? The reverence which our Saviour expects to his holy institution is *a reverence of obedience.* That man has a due sense upon his mind of the solemnity of the Sacrament, who is careful to approach it with all the humility and sense of unworthiness, which becomes polluted dust and ashes; but *such a superstitious sort of reverence, as makes us afraid to do our duty is dishonourable to God, and hurtful to ourselves.*

2d Excuse—*That of unworthiness.* There is a twofold worthiness in reference to the Sacrament, *a worthiness of merit, and a worthiness of meetness.* Now in the former sense, not only the holiest Saint on Earth, but the highest Angel in Heaven is unworthy of this privilege. But then there is a worthiness of meetness—such a fitness and preparation of the soul as the Gospel requires, and Christ will accept. A beggar may not be worthy of your alms, but it would be pride, not humility in him, to refuse your alms, when entreated to accept them, upon pretence of being unworthy of them. The truth is, an humble sense of unworthiness, if really felt, is in God's account a fit qualification.

It may be said, that we are on the safest side, by keeping away from the ordinance. But this is a manifest mistake. The guilt and danger of unworthy refusing, is certainly as great, or greater, than the danger of

unworthy receiving. For not to come at all, is a bold affront to the authority of Christ, and a mighty contempt of the love of Christ. Did they, in the Gospel, who made light of Christ's invitation to the marriage supper, escape any better, than he that came without a wedding garment? Were they not both destroyed, they for their disobedience, as well as he for his disrespect?

3d Excuse—*I fear I am under the power of a hard heart, and cannot mourn for sin so much as I should.*

Now if you have such a degree of sorrow for, as puts you upon leaving off your sins, though you cannot mourn for sin, so much as others do, and as you would do, yet you may be a true penitent. All are not sinners alike; and therefore the sorrows of all persons will not be alike. The lives of some have been tainted with great crimes. And their sins, looking ghastly upon their consciences, no wonder if they labour under such agonies of mind, such horrors and terrors of conscience, as others are strangers to and unacquainted with. Perhaps God has blessed you with a pious education, and his restraining grace has kept you from those presumptuous acts of sin of which others have been guilty, and consequently you are a stranger to their violent expressions of grief and sorrow; yet at the same time, you may have such a convincing sense of sin, as may cause you to forsake it, and although you do not mourn so much as you would, yet you mourn that you can mourn no more. *Know for your comfort, that you are not under the power of an hard heart.* You do not wholly want the grace of repentance, but ought to come to this ordinance, to increase your Godly sorrow for sin, believing and expecting, that the sight of a broken, bleeding Saviour,

will tend to the further breaking of your heart, and increasing your godly sorrow for sin.

4th Excuse—The danger of relapsing.

God requires our utmost care to avoid sin, and shun temptations, whether communicants or not; yet if we sin, he will pardon us upon our repentance. Those who stay away from the Sacrament, are bound equally with those who are not communicants, to avoid all sin; and it is no where said, or intimated, that God is more ready to pardon the former, than the latter, upon repentance. The Sacrament is an appointed means to *enable us* to strive more and more against sin and to get the victory over it.

5th Excuse—*I dare not come, because I labour under so many fears and doubts, as to my own sincerity. Had I an assurance of my state of grace I might venture to come; but I have heard that nobody ought to come to this ordinance, that wants assurance.*

There are two sorts of doubtings: One proceeds from want of faith, the other from weakness of faith. The former have great reason to doubt of their condition. It is very dangerous and ought not one moment to be rested in. But then there are doubtings which arise from weakness of faith—"O, thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Now this ordinance is the proper remedy for the relief and cure of those doubtings, and if we keep from it the stronger will our fears grow, and the more will our doubts increase. It is a great mistake indeed, that none should approach the Lord's Table, who want a full assurance of their grace. If a person has it already, there is no need of going to the Sacrament for it. No man will go to

the insurance office to secure an estate which he has in his own possession, and apprehends to be out of the reach of danger.

6th Excuse—*Many who go to this Sacrament lead as bad lives as those who never go, and not much good is gotten by it. And if some do dishonour their Saviour, after having been guests at his table, is that any reason why you should disobey him? Walk by rule, not by example. Because there are hypocrites among professing christians, is that an excuse for disobedience to God? May not they be more ready to repent? We have reason to believe that conscience is more quick in reproofing such persons, than those who never received. There is more hope of a man, who comes to this ordinance, and yet does not live so well after it as he should, than of one who profanely keeps from it, and casts off all regard to God, and religion—The remembrance of what he has done, cannot but strike the mind of the former at one time or other. "He that eats and drinks unworthily, endangers his own soul;" and conscience may reproach him for it. But those, who to avoid this danger, will not eat and drink at all, do they not run into a greater danger?*

7th Excuse—*The unworthiness of others.* True humility will teach us to suspect the worst of ourselves, and to hope the best of others. Another person's sin cannot deprive us of the benefit and comfort of the ordinance. When by the grace of God, and our own endeavours, we are fit, the wickedness of others cannot deprive us of any part of the benefit of receiving. The presence of wicked persons cannot pollute the ordinance, or lessen its benefits to us, who are no way accessory to their sins.

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The Duties of Vestrymen.

No. 5.

By our act of assembly, the Vestry are authorized to provide a minister for the parish. There is a canon of the state convention which we would here bring into notice.

"Applicants for parishes to exhibit a certificate of their episcopal qualifications and religious characters."

"No clergyman, making application for admission into any vacant parish or cure, shall be received, as minister of such parish or cure, until he produce to the vestry thereof a certificate from the Bishop, or, if there be no Bishop, from two members of the Standing Committee, of his episcopal qualifications and religious character."

The reasons for such a canon we apprehend to be principally those, which will be found in and suggested by the remarks that we are about to offer upon it.

We are very well aware how reluctant Vestrymen sometimes are, to doubt, that they alone, of all others, are the most competent to judge what clergyman would best suit the congregation, or to suppose that the bishop, (who by another canon, is to be apprized of a vacancy when it occurs.) can give them any very useful suggestions in the premises. And indeed, if the excellence of a clergyman depended, as is but too generally thought, upon the beauties of his discourse; and his powers as an orator, then perhaps there would not be so much to be said in opposition to this notion. And this too, would be the case, if the religious state of the congregation was to be determined by their love of fine preaching, or the admiration which they felt for their preacher. But we ought surely to know that a man may preach well, and to the admiration of all who hear him, and yet afterwards prove a *nuisance* to that congregation which engages him. Various are the qualifications necessary to constitute a clergyman. We

will here quote, from one of the many valuable pieces to be found in a book, the title of which is "Modern Characters."

"It is more easy to give one answer to all men, than a separate reply to the several individuals who make their application. In one instance, a large acquaintance with human nature, a deep knowledge of our own hearts, a great superiority to prejudice, and a careful attention to the case before us, is requisite; in the other, it is only necessary to be furnished with a few general truths, to have at hand a certain stock of sayings which may be learnt almost even by rote."

It must be his study, and earnest endeavour, to live as he preaches, and to be an wholesome example and pattern to the flock. When God, of his infinite goodness, provides for a congregation such a minister, the more plain, and practical, and unadorned his discourses, and the more simple and unpretending his *manner*, the more apt he will be, not perhaps to excite the admiration of those most ready to judge of the manner and style, heedless of the matter, but to be made eminently instrumental in turning sinners from the errors of their ways, and in edifying those who indeed desire to be taught, that they may act according to the will of their Heavenly Father. Now we apprehend, that to preach is in truth one of the least of a clergyman's important duties. We do not mean that oratory may not draw to church larger crowds; but crowds may flock to church, ignorant why they ought to go, and not benefitted by going. A clergyman, who at one period of his life boasted much of his preaching the gospel, is said afterwards to have confessed, it is true he had increased the number of his congregation, but alas! "I have converted a con-

gregation of christians into a congregation of *Devils*." Let the clergyman look into his own heart, and examine if there do not lurk in it somewhere, a most criminal propensity to seek man's applause, rather than to do the will of his Divine Master.

We must be allowed to remain of the number of those, who do not entirely approve of the fashionable mode of ascertaining the merits of a clergyman, and do not think, that in order to make a judicious choice, it is necessary that the candidates, or applicants, should all be heard. Electioneering sermons are not at all to our taste; and perhaps it would be better if the clergy, with one consent, would refuse, either when a vacancy is likely to occur, or has occurred, to be thus put upon their trial. Certain it is, that when the preaching is over, the vestry are as unable to judge of the preacher's real qualifications as before. Such sermons are in fact rarely a fair sample, *if a sample at all*, of the discourses of the *settled* minister. And indeed, if we could in any case justify any thing like unfair dealing in a clergyman, we should not blame one of them, if sensible that his own productions, whether read or delivered *extempore*, were none of the best, he made choice of a better to win the good opinion of his *judges*.

But a clergyman's character should be understood, at least as well as how he preaches. Now it often happens, that the characters of those, who in a parish are talked of for its clergyman, is wholly unknown to all in the parish. It is much more likely that the Bishop, with his opportunities of information, should be acquainted with the characters and past conduct of any minister, (especially if he come not from the vicinity,) than the vestry, or any

person who would be so good natured, at such a time, as to attempt to do the Bishop's business for him.

It is not now necessary to tell any one, how often vestries and congregations have been deceived by a pulpit harangue or two, into a belief, that a minister would suit them most admirably; and yet, when more was known of him, he was much less esteemed. In many cases, and after every reasonable precaution taken, it will happen, that both the Bishop, and vestry, will be disappointed. This is less likely to be the case, however, when the vestry have proceeded, as in every case of vacancy they ought to proceed, and as by the canons they are directed to proceed; and it may be adopted, by each one of us, as a salutary rule, that the wisdom of the church is superior to any one man's wisdom.

We confess, we do think it of much more importance to know, concerning a minister, how he would act and discourse when suddenly called to the bed side of a dying parishioner, even yet wanting to be instructed in the way of salvation, or when requested to speak to him or her, whose mind is tortured with doubt and distress, in which the "arrows" of the Lord "stick fast," and his "hand presseth sore." We say, to judge of the skillfulness and real value of a clergyman, it is of vastly more importance to know this of him, than to know what sort of a sermon he can get up, what talents he possesses for amusing, and bewitching, and stealing away the hearts of his congregation, or how *theatrical* he is in the delivery of his sermons.

We hope there could be found in all of our congregations enough of Christian charity, to be ready to do more, than to excuse that minis-

ter, who, when his congregation had assembled to hear his public harangue, was obliged to tell them, that the afflictions of the afflicted, and the distresses and perplexities of the half awakened, had demanded of him that time which was to have been spent in preparation for the Sunday's discourse; and who rather than venture, without due preparation, to discourse to them of the deep concerns of eternity, would affectionately advise them to retire to their homes, and there read and meditate on the brief epistles of St. John, or any other part of Scripture, which he might think proper to prefer.

We cannot accuse ourselves of a disposition, to appraise below its value, preaching, as it is (rather improperly perhaps,) called. But then we may be too fond even of a good thing, and about this thing called preaching; its efficacy in bringing men to repentance and amendment of life, very erroneous notions may be entertained by the laity, and (if it be not deemed irreverent,) by clergymen likewise. Indeed, we do think, that there is by much too great a disposition to undervalue *God's methods*, and to overrate, in the business of conversion, the *preacher's powers*—too much reluctance, sometimes discovered, to give to God *all* the glory of having softened and subdued an once hardened and rebellious heart. There may be, even in those regarded full grown Christians, whether of the ministry or of the congregation, much of “an evil heart of unbelief,” and between fashioning and proclaiming a correct creed, and at all times putting that creed into practice, how very—very wide the difference?

The physicians have been accused, most undeservedly we trust, of

a more prevailing disposition, than others, to scepticism. No one article of the Apostle's creed, we incline to think, are the medical gentlemen more disposed to question and criticise, than the truth conveyed in these two lines of our 22d Hymn, where, in addressing the Deity it is said,

“All Med'cines act by thy decree,
“Receive Commission all from thee.”

Now, there are other physicians, besides those of the body, commissioned to administer other remedies, and to heal other diseases; and may not some of them occasionally overrate their skill, and be willing, if not desirous, to have too much merit ascribed to their doings? It was the observation of an old Presbyterian divine, and perhaps is every day verified, that a man may pretend to preach “Christ crucified,” and may name the name of Christ in every sentence he utters, and yet all the while may be preaching, *not Christ, but himself*. May not the Christian, and even the Christian minister, sometimes talk as if it was *his* “to form the heart anew?”

These *hints* we venture to give, with every feeling of kindness and sincere good will, towards those to whom they may apply. They may deserve a moment's consideration. It is dangerous to suffer the ignorant to remain in the ignorant belief, that that which (if the bible be truth,) is altogether the Lord's doings, was any part of it man's work; or could not have been as easily accomplished, if such had been the Lord's will, by the instrumentality of any other, and even a much *weaker vessel*.

This truth indeed, is often proclaimed, but is it *felt* as it ought to be? We dismiss the subject.

For the Repository.

It seems to be the notion of some people, that the benefits to be derived from the ordinances of religion, depend, in some measure, upon the personal holiness and qualifications of him, who is appointed to administer them; and that the Clergyman who is not himself a pious man, is unqualified to convey the spiritual effects to the recipient. That a Clergyman ought to be an holy man, there can be no doubt, but this for his own soul's sake especially. The notion is a most dangerous one, and those who entertain it, must judge unworthily of God. The means of grace instituted by him, depend, for their due effect, not upon the personal holiness of him, who is to administer them, but upon the disposition and qualifications with which they are received. If it were otherwise our condition would be most deplorable indeed. God has commanded us to receive the sacraments, and yet would have left us, without any means of ascertaining from whom they could be duly received. God has not enabled us to judge with certainty, who are holy, and about a concern of such everlasting moment, a God of infinite mercy would not leave any room for doubt, in the minds of those who really seek and desire to know the truth. We may judge very favourably of the spiritual attainments of an individual Clergyman, but this judgment *may be* erroneous, and it is a melancholy truth, that in nothing are we more apt to err, than in our opinion of the real character of the ministers of the gospel. Extravagant pretensions often are mistaken for real piety, and the really humble, meek, and unassuming christian, is as often regarded as deficient in some of the essential characteristics of a religious man. We

subjoin some remarks upon the subject by that sound, and learned, and eminently pious Divine, Charles Leslie.

“1. The only objection of those Quakers, who are otherwise convinced of the obligation of the sacraments, is the necessity they think there is, of great personal holiness in the administrators; without which they cannot see, how the spiritual effects of the sacraments can be conveyed. But I would beseech them to consider, whether by this, instead of referring the glory to God, and lessening the performance of man, which I charitably presume (and I am confident as to some, of whom I speak) is their true and sincere intention, their well-intentioned zeal has not turned the point of this question; even to over-magnify man, and transfer the glory of God unto his weak instrument; as if any (the least part) of the divine virtue, which God has annexed to his sacraments, did proceed from his minister. If this be not the meaning, (as sure it is not) why so much stress laid upon the sanctity of the ministers? as if through “their power or holiness” the Holy Ghost was given. Acts iii. 12.

2. To obviate this pretence, our Saviour Christ “chose a devil” (John vi. 70.) to be one of his Apostles; and he was sent to baptize and work miracles as well as the rest: and those, whom Judas did baptize, were no doubt as well baptized, and did partake of the communication of the spirit (according to their preparation for it) as much as any, who were baptized by the other Apostles; unless you will say, that Christ sent him to baptize, who had no authority to baptize, and that none should receive benefit by his baptism; which would be to cheat and delude the people, and is

a great blasphemy against Christ; and a distrust of his power, as if it were limited by the poor instrument he pleases to make use of; whereas,

3. His greatness is often most magnified in the meanness of the instruments, by which he works. Thus he destroyed Egypt by frogs and lice, and the Philistines by emerods and mice, and sent his armies of flies and hornets to dispossess the Canaanites. Psal. viii. 2: "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, because of thine enemies; that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger;" i. e. that the enemies of God might be confounded, when they saw his great power exerted, by such weak and contemptible instruments. The walls of Jericho (the type of spiritual wickedness) were thrown down by the blast of seven rams' horns, when blown by the priests, whom he had commanded; and he rebuked the iniquity of Balaam, by the mouth of an ass, to show, that no instruments are ineffectual in his hand; and made use of the mouth of Balaam, to prophesy of Christ. For this cause, says St. Barnabas, in his Catholick epistle, c. 5, did Christ choose men, who were "exceeding great sinners," to be his Apostles, to show the greatness of his power and grace; and put the inestimable treasure of his Gospel into earthen vessels, that the praise might be to God, and not to men.

4. St. Paul rejoiced in Christ being preached, Phil. i. 16, though not sincerely by those who did it; because God can bring good out of evil, and, by wicked instruments, propagate his Gospel, turning their malice (even of the Devil himself) to the furtherance of the faith: otherwise the Apostle could have no cause to rejoice in the preaching of

wicked men, if none could receive benefit by it. And he plainly supposes, 1 Cor. ix. 27, that a man may save others by his preaching, and yet himself be a castaway.

5. And so far as we can know or judge any thing, we see daily experience of this; that God has touched men's hearts, upon hearing the truth spoken, though by men, who were great hypocrites, and very wicked. And what reason can be given to the contrary? Truth is truth, whoever speaks it; and if my heart be prepared, the good seed receives no evil tincture of the hand, that sowed it; and who can limit God, that his grace may not go along with me in this?

But yet they confess, that there is something else necessary, besides the personal holiness of the administrator: otherwise, they would think themselves as much qualified to administer it, as any others, because, I presume, they suppose themselves to have as great a measure of the Spirit as other men.

This requisite, which they want, is that of lawful ordination.

And that we may proceed the more clearly in this matter, with respect still to that difficulty, upon which the Quakers lay the stress, we will enquire concerning those qualifications, which are requisite in any person, that shall take upon him to administer the sacraments of Christ's institution.

These qualifications are of two sorts, personal or sacerdotal.

1. Personal; the holiness of the administrator. And though this is a great qualification to fit and prepare a man for such an holy administration, yet this alone does not sufficiently qualify any man to take upon him such an administration.

2. But there is moreover required a sacerdotal qualification; that is, an outward commission, to authorize a man to execute any sacerdotal or ministerial act of religion: For "this honour no man taketh unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." Heb. v, 4. "So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high-priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, Thou art a priest, &c."

Accordingly we find, that Christ did not take upon him the office of a preacher, till after that outward commission given to him, by a voice from heaven, at his baptism; for it is written, Matt. iv. 17, "From that time Jesus began to preach:" Then he began, and he was then "about thirty years of age," Luke iii. 23. Now no man can doubt of Christ's qualifications before that time, as to holiness, sufficiency, and all personal endowments. And if all these were not sufficient to Christ himself, without an outward commission, what other man can pretend to it, upon the account of any personal excellencies in himself, without an outward commission?

3. And as Christ was outwardly commissioned by his Father, so did not he leave it to his disciples, to every one's opinion of his own sufficiency, to thrust himself into the vineyard; but chose twelve Apostles by name, and after them, seventy others of an inferior order, whom he sent to preach.

4. And as Christ gave outward commissions, while he was upon the earth, so we find, that his Apostles did proceed in the same method, after his ascension. Acts xiv, 23. "They ordained them elders in every church."

5. But had they, who were thus ordained by the Apostles, power to

ordain others? Yes, Titus i. 5. i. Tim. v. 22. "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest ordain elders in every city. Lay hands suddenly on no man, &c." St. Clement, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, writing concerning the schism, which was then risen up amongst them, says, parag. 44, "That the Apostles foreknowing there would be contests, concerning the episcopal name, (or office,) did themselves appoint the persons;" and not only so, (lest that might be said to be of force, only during their time,) but that they afterwards established an order how, when those, whom they had ordained, should die, others, fit and approved men, should succeed them in their ministry." Par. 43. "That they who were intrusted with this work, by God in Christ, did constitute these officers."

Rennell on Scepticism.

No. 4.

Ignorance one of the intellectual causes of scepticism.

The first, and by far the most common cause of scepticism, as far as the understanding is concerned, is *Ignorance*. Of those who reject revelation, and its doctrines, few, very few, have ever troubled themselves to form any acquaintance with the real merits of a question, upon which they so peremptorily decide. *The nature of evidence in general, the particular testimony upon which the gospel is proposed*, are points to which their enquiries have never been directed. Of those who dispute the Divine authority of the scriptures, not one in a thousand have ever read through the volume which they condemn.

In every stage of scepticism, there is a very suspicious facility. In other

enquiries, the road even to the simplest truth, though direct, is steep and rugged, and the first sign of our having quitted the path, is the easiness of the ground on which we wander. Can we suppose, that religious truth is situated on an eminence less difficult, or that the ascent is less arduous? The Sun of righteousness like the luminary in the Heavens, is the fountain of light and heat, even to the meanest of the creation; but it is not therefore the less long nor the less laborious task, to investigate the laws under which its rays are transmitted, or to understand the phenomena attending their transmission.

Sophistry has a peculiar power of insinuating itself into an unsuspecting mind, especially when it is accompanied with that levity which passes for sincerity, with the young, and with that sarcasm which passes for sagacity with the ignorant. *Disarm the sceptic of his sneer, and you deprive him of his surest and most successful weapon. Many a mind which had steadiness enough to withstand the assault of argument, has fallen before a dark and a mysterious sarcasm.* Now in all this process, where do we discover the workings of that reason, which is the boasted support of scepticism? Surely a mind that can adopt the principles of infidelity, on the grounds, and in the manner, which has been described, is under the influence, not of reason, but of imposture. When a man can be induced to reject a system, without any acquaintance with its merits, without any examination of its evidences, when he can mistake sophistry for argument, and sarcasm for refutation, surely it cannot be his reason which directs the decision. Reason, in the very first stage of the matter, has been abandoned. Reason and christianity, which is the religion of reason, demand an impar-

tial, calm, and laborious investigation. Infidelity and its advocates pursue a different plan, even upon a point in which all their hopes and fears are involved; advocates at once, and judges in their own cause, they decide without a trial, they condemn without a defence.

That ignorance, and not examination, is the ground work of scepticism, is shown still more convincingly from the writings of those who have distinguished themselves in its cause. Of those who have attacked the scriptures, there is not one, who does not stand convicted of the grossest mistakes, both with respect to their evidence, their language, and their interpretation. Yet these are the men, from Bolingbroke and Hume, down to Voltaire and Paine, whose convicted calumnies have been circulated among those, whose understanding is too weak to resist the assault; and whose education has been too much neglected, to furnish them with the defence.

From the Christian Remembrancer.

It has been brought as a charge against the friends of christianity, and the lovers of truth, that they do not discover all that zeal and ardour in the cause, which is frequently to be witnessed in others. The real cause of this we conceive to be one, which pervades every description of mankind, and produces most important effects. There is necessarily more activity displayed by those who are contending for honour, than by others who have triumphed in the cause of truth. It is not that the latter have nothing to do, or that they are content to do nothing. But the spirits are less roused by a walk upon the plain at the top, than by an arduous struggle on the mountain side. In the former case, no material change can

be expected—in the latter something is added to our consequence by every succeeding step, and to *continue stationary is to continue insignificant.*

This principle is recognized, which ever way we turn our eyes. And when it is remembered, that our adversaries have likewise the advantage of an attack; that they may advance from whatever quarter, and may assemble in whatever numbers they think fit, while we are compelled to observe their proceedings, and shape our resistance accordingly, it will not be considered as a very heinous offence to have been less alert in counteracting them, than prudence required. The omission however being discovered, must be repaired without delay, we must withstand them, wheresoever they attack; and as they have attacked by short essays, and popular statements, endeavouring to gain these advantages *in detail*, which are utterly beyond their reach in a general contest, their plan must be adopted. The ardent spirit which has been enclosed so long in massy vessels must be liberated at last from its confinement. It shall be our endeavour to temper the rugged blast of controversy, to the shorn and bleating lamb, and to enable any man, who thinks the subject worth a moment's consideration, to perceive who is in the right.

We would by no means be understood to say, that the clergy have been insufficient to their own defence; but we lament that they have gained more credit than territory by their victories. It is here that our efforts may not prove unacceptable; and by abridging and disseminating the writings of others, by contrasting their candid and manly statements with the wavering unsettled doctrines of their opponents, by

convincing those who cannot at present listen to the words of the church, that the church is never silent, from want of an answer, we shall endeavour to advance our common cause.

From Gloucester Ridley's Discourses.

The law, by which was the knowledge of sin, fills the soul with the horrors of guilt, and the dread of punishment; it shows how vile we are, how offensive to the holiness of God, how much we are exposed to his just resentment. The compass of nature contains no healing medicine that can recover us, *though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much scap, it will not cleanse thee, the blood of bulls and of goats cannot take away sin.* Our old man, loaded with diseases and infirmities, finds his footsteps incline unto the dead, but knows no Medea's cauldron to restore it again, and give it its long lost youth and vigour; it despairs of rising with the Phoenix from its own ashes, renewed in strength and fresh with life. But our Saviour *brings light and immortality to light through the gospel*; he quiets our fears of divine justice, by an assurance of pardon, which he has procured for us by his propitiating blood, that we may be *justified by his grace*; and of new powers that shall be communicated to us, to restore our nature *by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he will shed on us abundantly*; and that the same spirit shall adopt us into the family of God, unite us to him, and make us *heirs of eternal life*. These are the promises of the Gospel, *the glad tydings of peace and salvation.*

The Providence of God, in his judgments, his trials and his mercies, are sometimes considered as means of grace, but perhaps they might more properly be called sea-

sons and occasions, kindly dispensed by God, for the exercise, and unfolding of these graces, which had been before administered by other means. However if means—they are such as God has entirely reserved in his own hands, and are not in the power of the church to dispense. Wherefore they are not reckoned among the means of the Gospel, but of extra evangelical grace, common to every man, as well without as within the church, and *which it is no part of our duty, as christians, to seek after, but to be careful to make a proper use of, when it shall please God to visit us with them.*

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From Dean Stanhope.

He gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers: For the perfecting of the Saints; for the work of the ministry: for the edifying of the body of Christ. 4 Eph. 11, 12.

The necessities of mankind, are of several kinds. These cannot be served without a proportionable number of organs placed differently. The difference of that form and place depends upon the uses assigned to each. All the parts thus formed and placed, make up one regular fabrick. Every one of these is useful and necessary, in its proper position. The least and lowest can no more be spared, than the noblest and highest. The exalting of one above its *due situation and proportion, would produce a defect and deformity not less than the debasing or diminishing of another.* Every one therefore is of equal value, when considered as a member, and all compose the same body, consequently this difference of gifts and stations ought to breed no discontent, but quite the contrary.

What then is the result of all this, but that since all cannot have the same place, nor execute the same

office, in the church and in the world, each should rest satisfied with the disposal of his wise Head, and cheerfully take up with that use he is framed for? That the eye should be content with seeing, and the ear with hearing, the hand with working, and the foot with walking; the unlearned with receiving instruction, and the learned with the labour of giving it. The lawyer, with the bar; the divine with his ministry; the tradesman with his shop; and the husbandman with his tillage. *For when these go out of their own way, and invade the business proper to each other, the union of the body is broken, and nothing but disorder and mischief can possibly come of it.* This pragmatistical and envious spirit, this ambition and emulation, is in truth the cause of all that confusion, by which either the church or the state is at any time endangered. And therefore, St. Paul hath wisely joined those two exhortations together, that *ye study to be quiet and to do your own business.* This is what he presses here: that we would not take upon us to be wiser than He who made us, and posted us in this rank, but as we are elsewhere directed. *As God hath distributed to every man so let him walk and therein abide with God.* Where levity and littleness of spirit, ambition or greediness of gain, envy at others, or uneasiness with one's own private condition, are at the bottom of any change of our employment, there to be sure the man is blameable, and the duty of his membership violated and forgotten. For where all cannot have a place high, and honourable, eminent and public, none should scorn those of a lower and laborious degree; but do his business gladly there, while in it, as well as gladly embrace promotion, when opportunities offer for them.

“Leadings of Providence.”—An Extract.

I have heard this question proposed, “How may we discern the leadings of Providence?” The meaning of such a question I should suppose to be this—How may we know, in cases of doubt and difficulty, the way which God seems to point out?

In answer to such an enquiry it may be observed,

1st. We may never safely conclude that God points out this or that way, because it is *easier* than any other.

2. It is equally unsafe to judge of the will of God, from *strong impressions* upon the mind. Many well disposed persons place an undue and dangerous confidence in these. Satan often infuses sudden thoughts into the mind; and more effectually to gain his purpose, transforms himself into an angel of light; all impressions therefore should be brought to the touchstone of God’s word: they should be jealously examined and scrupulously tried by the only rule of duty; and no further attended to, than as they agree with that rule, which they assuredly will if they come from God. He will never impress any thing on our minds, which is contradictory to his own words.

3. The same observations may be applied to *dreams*. No doubt the will of God has been, on many occasions, revealed to his servants in this way; but dreams may be traced to various sources. Some may be from God, others we can scarcely doubt, from their nature and tendency, are from wicked spirits; but in general we may presume that a dream cometh from the multitude of business. The utmost that can be fairly allowed is, that the hint should be duly weighed, and tried in the same way as impressions by the only rule of duty—the word of God. If ever the will of God has been signi-

fied in these ways, the occasion has been extraordinary. Besides, having now a complete volume of God’s revealed will, *we have no right to look for direction in the path of duty to any other quarter*. Some well meaning christians indeed are apt to judge of the will of God in any matter from particular passages of scripture, which present themselves on opening the Bible for the purpose. This savours of enthusiasm, and is *not unlike tempting God*.

By way of answer to the enquiry, I would suggest the following hints.

1. It is a great thing to be in the habit of holy and humble intercourse with God. “In *all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*”

2. An enlarged acquaintance with the word of God, will be peculiarly helpful in cases of doubt and perplexity. That word contains sufficient rules and directions for *every* part of our conduct in life, and those who study it with humility and prayer, will be able to select such instructions as are adapted to their particular circumstances.

3. Prayer to God on the subject of the particular difficulty, may be properly recommended. “If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God.”

4. It is of very great importance to have acquired a habit of christian self-denial. *If we are defective here our judgments may be easily warped.*

Lastly. Let me recommend patient waiting upon God as indispensably necessary; but to this we are in general exceedingly averse. When our minds are set upon a thing, our time is always ready: hence we are apt to go before our guide. “Tarry thou the Lord’s leisure,” is needful counsel. The great secret indeed, respecting this subject, seems to

be "wait on the Lord and keep his way."

From Jortin's Discourses.

There is not one question in the whole compass of controversial divinity, that has caused greater or longer disputes and quarrels, than that about irresistible grace, spiritual assistance, original or rather hereditary sin, absolute predestination, human liberty, and the natural powers of man.

The church, for the first four hundred years, was happily free from these debates; and christians were pretty well agreed, in believing that man was a free agent—that he was a weak, imperfect, and trespassing creature, and that God, for the sake of Christ, was ever willing to forgive and assist him, if he was not wanting to himself. But above thirteen hundred years ago, a dissension arose concerning those points, and two parties were soon formed. The first maintained election and reprobation, the second were defenders of conditional decrees, and of human liberty and human power in the performance of moral good and evil: while others endeavoured to steer a middle course; and this our church is thought, by several learned persons, to have intended in her articles.

Concerning the disputants themselves, we may safely affirm, that the defenders of the free agency of man, have been beyond all comparison the more learned, judicious, and moderate men, and that severity and oppression have most appeared on the other side; which was a very absurd behaviour, even upon their own principles; for if a man be a mere machine, to what purpose would you contend with him, or apply violence to him? To make him change his opinion? That is im-

possible. According to these doctrines, a man has no opinions, properly speaking, or they are necessary to him and he cannot avoid them.

As to the controversy, I would only ask two or three plain questions. How can it be supposed that God would delude and deceive all mankind by making them believe that they are free agents? All men think so, till by the help of some mistakes and quibbles, they have learned to call it in question, though against their own inward sense and hourly experience.

Why are men encumbered with a conscience, approving or condemning their past actions? Is it fit that a machine should have such sentiments? Not more than that a clock should be endued with a conscience to reprove and torment it for going wrong.

Why should the scriptures propose rewards and punishments, promises and threatenings, to those who can do nothing at all? What should we think of a man, who should preach to a nursery of trees, and propose rewards to those that should grow up straight, and punishment to those that should grow crooked?

From nature entirely corrupted, nothing could proceed but evil; from over powering grace nothing could proceed but good. Whence then this mixture of good and evil, of right and wrong, of defects and amendments? It plainly ariseth from the liberty of man, and from his using or abusing it.

The Convention of the P. E. Church of Maryland,

Will meet in Baltimore on the 31st of May, being the first Wednesday after Trinity Sunday.